/159 cont./

764 The corpse is lowered into the grave with ropes, with the greatest care taken not to bang it or lower it roughly to the bottom of the grave. This would mean an offense to the dead man, who in some way would show his annoyance at this lack of care, which is in itself an insult; and the relatives would feel considerably offended at the want of respect shown to one who was of their blood and at a time so important to the Guajiro as that of burying a kinsman. It represents, to his way of thinking, an insult almost as great as to refuse to dig his grave, to speak ill of a dead relative, or to pronounce his name.

764 The same individual who digs the grave covers it with the excavated earth, doing his work with extreme care. Then he 783 goes to his home where he is submitted for some time to a purification ceremonial. The people who formed the procession return to their homes, after shooting off their firearms while the burial is in progress with the idea of frightening off all evil spirits. In times past they shot arrows repeatedly. Upon return the relatives also go through a purification ceremony, and generally, gathered together, they slaughter an animal for themselves from among those which had not been presented nor had belonged to the deceased.

764 For the dead man they place a supply of food and drink in the grave (his favorite food), and if while alive he liked to get drunk, they place an abundance of liquor. His most valued [514 personal utensils, especially his chamber pot, an indication 554] that the owner was of high status, are placed on his grave, as are his cups and dishes, which also give prestige to the dead man.

765 During a more or less lengthy period his closest relatives go frequently to visit his grave, taking with them food which they eat over it, after weeping there for a long time and asking the dead person to join them. On the eighth day after his death it is mandatory /160/ to make such a visit, later, at the end of each lunar month after the occurrence of the death. These visits are made with more frequency when the relatives believe

/160 cont./

765 that they have felt the spirit of the departed, which to them is an indication that they have not complied fully with the funeral ritual or that something was missing from the post-mortem attire or that he lacks some material necessities beyong the grave. For this reason they take him food and drink. Another practice is that any Guajiro -- man or woman -- who passes by the cemetery must enter, above all if he knows there has been a recent burial, and cry a little over the graves, recalling his own troubles and those of his clan. In the period immediately following the burial, the relatives of the dead person light bonfires in his honor during the night in order to illumine the road he must follow until he arrives at his future home, and so that his spirit will not continue to wander, like that of a murderer or a suicide, or become harmful. In Santander del Sur this custom existed in the distant past but nowadays the peasants limit themselves to placing a candle inside the sleeve of the deceased's shroud, so that he may light his path.

765 The Guajiro family remember their relative for a long
769 time. Every sunrise before starting their day's work, they weep for him and the others of their clan group who have died (Cf. Chap. II, Cult of the dead).

When some time has passed after the burial of their relative (four or five months), two women return to his grave, almost secretly, his mother and his most beloved aunt, or his first wife. They reopen the grave until they find the body, raise it halfway up the grave, putting earth inside and then re-covering it. They say the object of this is to avoid the skeleton's being dispersed at such a depth when the exhumation
793 takes place. These two women, after having carried out this labor, go through a special purification. About two years after death comes the time for exhumation, when all the relatives come together. They send out runners to announce the exhumation. All come to this ceremony in which the slaughter and distribution of animals and of drink is repeated; it takes place in the house of the deceased or in the cemetery itself,

/160 cont./

765 769 where an enramada /bough-covered shelter/ is erected if the house is too far away. The remains are put into an earthenware urn which is placed on a hammock around which they all congregate, also on hammocks, the female friends and relatives weeping over the dead man a second time. A new grave is dug in the clan cemetery, in which his remains are deposited. At the present time it is customary for each small family of means to have a common funerary urn /161/ in which the bone remains of all the immediate consanguineous members are accumulated.

The exhumation of the remains is a labor entrusted to the very close relatives of the dead man who were much attached to him. By this action they are offered a family honor which, like the digging of his grave, is never refused. These individuals, two in number, open up the grave; and one, his body totally covered with a robe and his hands wrapped in a cloth, scratches in the earth to find the bones. As the region is so dry the bodies are marvelously preserved. First of all he brings out the skull with much respect amid the silence of the others gathered around. He cleans it carefully, showing his affection for the deceased in each of these details, and then he passes it to his companion, together with the rest of the bones. This assistant is covered, especially his face, and his work consists in placing the remains in the urn destined beforehand for such a purpose. These two persons, once having [783] finished their operation, carefully purify themselves and for some time after follow a special diet.

In these exhumation ceremonies, the relatives of the [262] exhumed person submit to the same dietary proscription of not partaking of the meat of the slaughtered animals, and they receive the sympathy of their relatives and friends, who have come together again for this purpose.

768 A funeral custom still exists but has been weakened in some sectors that are more in contact with whites and the influence of the mission, and that is to abandon the house where the sick man died immediately after the body has been buried,

[33 cont.]

114 117 562 *756 We do not wish to question Professor Métraux's statement about the influence of White contact in relation to medicine-women in the other groups cited by him, as we are not objectively acquainted with them. But with regard to the Guajiro, we have to make the clarification that in the descriptions collected by us in the field, it is precisely the woman who really initiates magic, or better said shamanism, among the Indians, when she obliges her nephew to follow her own career. This aspect can be better understood when the reader comes to the section of this chapter entitled "The shaman in oral literature." [174] The fact that women appear as shamans in oral literature demonstrates the antiquity of the institution, as this literature faithfully preserves the most remote traditions of the group.

*756 The shaman, man of two worlds. All that we have seen in connection with the life cycle of the Guajiro shaman makes us think that he is what we have called him in the subtitle that heads these paragraphs: a man of two worlds — the world of the living and the world of the spirits of the dead. [34]

*756 554 The communication which he establishes after all the preparatory ceremonies with one or several protector spirits who lavish on him every kind of counsel and instruction and even protect him against evil in all its manifestations: illness, enemies, public calamities, etc., make of him a man distinct from all the rest. His status is superior to that of other mortals because in his hands he has power over both good and evil. It is this duality that binds with his science a man who is both sacred and human, a being respected by all but feared at the same time, a good man, able to cure illnesses, but also a malignant being, liable to let loose the fury of the spirits beyond the grave. He is respected, loved, feared, and even, we might dare to say, profoundly hated.

● [783] What predominates in him above all is the characteristic of impurity due to contamination from death. Sacred and impure become confounded in him; he is sacred because he is untouchable, and he is untouchable because of his participation with death through his protector spirits.

*756 His dual position as inhabitant of two worlds, involuntary it is true, depends on two fundamentally simple facts: first, his

[41 cont.]

764 782 1. The first of these types refers to the custom established among them of sacrificing, during the wake of any member of the community, a number of animals belonging to the dead man (cows, bulls, goats, sheep), the meat of which is divided among those attending the wake along with the corresponding drink, which in these days is rum but in times past was chicha.

[767] The reason given for the sacrificing of animals during a wake in answer to the question is that this is done in deference to the guests and especially to those whom we could call "professional mourners," who spend all day and all night moaning over the corpse. But on observing certain practices and particularly certain taboos regarding the meat of these sacrificed animals, one has to think rather of the ritual character of the sacrifice.

262 764 ●783 782 It is a fact that the relatives — sons, daughters, nephews [and nieces, sabrinos], brothers [and sisters, hermanos] etc. — of the deceased cannot eat the meat of animals sacrificed during the wake or during the later ceremony of secondary burial, as this, according to their belief, would be equivalent to eating their dead kinsman's flesh. This taboo, imposed on the deceased's relatives, serves to prove to us — so far as it is possible to deduce — the ritual aspect of the sacrifice of the dead man's livestock, stock which on being slaughtered takes on the same untouchable or magical quality, which the individual takes on when he disappears from the world of the living and enters the universe of the dead. [42] To put this more plainly, the animals sacrificed are contaminated by their dead owner.

[765] The untouchable quality of the animal sacrificed at the wake or in the ceremony that accompanies the second burial is supported by the following fact. The belief exists in La [843 753] Guajira that if during pregnancy the mother or the father of the future child is present at the exhuming of a corpse, the child is born sickly, suffers from permanent diarrhea and night sweats, 755 and gets more and more pale and progressively thinner. Its 765 illness continues to get worse, and none of the familiar remedies have the desired effect. The parents then resort to the following system of curing (a system which with some variations is also common among the people of the town of Santander). They wait until there is an exhumation ceremony, and then

[68 cont.]
774 of the soul is uniform, so also the effects of all things are magically related to one another." (46)

46. Born. Fetiche, Amuleto, Talisman [Fetish, Amulet, Talisman], p. 3.

This polydemonism of which Dr. Born writes, or spiritism as we have called it, can be seen more clearly in the life of the Guajiro communities in the chapter which deals with the [764] aspect of funerals. All the ceremonial relating to the dead is filled with this belief [69] in the universal soul and in the survival of a personal soul after death.

755 In the chapter we are dealing with we see it also clearly established, especially in the curative methods followed by the shaman, or medicine man, who seeks the assistance of his protector spirit or spirits to find out the kind of illness the sick man is suffering from and the manner of eradicating it from his body, as well as in certain aspects of household remedies consisting of preventative methods. In no way different are the 764 taboo prohibitions related to the dead, the burials and exhuma- ●783 tions in general, animals sacrificed in funeral ceremonial, and 784 persons who have been in contact, directly or indirectly, with the dead by assisting in the burial or exhumation of human remains, in digging graves, in imprudently gazing on the placing of a burial in the grave, etc., all of which contaminate with the essence of the dead, who by his very nature, by the act of having passed to a higher life situated on a plane of superior potentialities to that which he has left, is converted into something dangerous, sacred or impure, as the case may be, and for this reason contaminating.

751 This contaminating action of the dead also appears in the aspect of medicine since they endeavor to avoid possible harm 775 to children before birth and therefore to pregnant women or those in actual childbirth, because, as we have already seen these are the most likely victims of the malevolent action of spirits. Children especially receive such influences through their parents when they are in the mother's womb and have such poor means of self-defense.

[77 cont.]
762 inflicted on the objects which were the principal active agents
768 in carrying out his fatal determination. As the form of suicide
672 that is practiced in La Guajira is almost exclusively that of hanging, they proceed to burn the branch on which the individual hanged himself and the rope which he used, because, they say, these were the direct causes of his death.

With respect to the punishment carried out on the objects
682 (inanimate to us) which served for the carrying out of suicide,
672 several suggestions may be made. In one case, the "compensation payment for blood" may be recalled, the established customary law of this community by means of which whatever spilling of blood that may be caused in any person, voluntary or involuntary, directly or indirectly, has to be paid for in accord-
[698] ance with a valuation decreed by the so-called "arbitrators," or "palabras," who are nothing more than intermediaries named by the family groups affected to settle the affair peacefully. This payment is considerable when the blood spilling ends in the
682 victim's death. Should the murderer refuse to pay the sum ar-
628 ranged for (whether in livestock, necklaces, precious stones, etc.), then the members of the victim's family group take vengeance on him personally and kill him. All this naturally ends in war to the death, or putchi, between the two extended family groups, an occurrence which is extremely frequent in La
682 Guajira. Hence as "compensation payment for blood" cannot
762 be claimed, from these objects (the tree and the rope), they are
672 punished in default by destruction by fire. This hypothesis is reinforced, if we remember that to the Guajiro Indian, as well as
[774] to most primitives, objects — which to us are not alive — are
[778] able to exercise both good and bad influences on the individual (Cf. "Sickness and Medicine" and "Amulets, Fetishes, Talismans"), because they possess a spirit — a kind of mana, or immaterial force, which surrounds and animates everything.

Another suggestion that could be made with respect to the
762 destruction of the objects used by a suicide is the following: As
● 783 these articles were in direct contact with the dead man, and particularly with a corpse as dangerous as a suicide is, it is necessary that they be destroyed so that the contamination

[77 cont.]
762 783 should not be transmitted to the persons who for any circumstance may approach or touch them.

762 769 775 The wickedness of the spirit of the suicide, in any event, is seen to be reaffirmed by another Guajiro belief, which is that of not daring to pass at [78] night by the place where an Indian may have hanged himself because his spirit wanders continually around the place, and being malignant it will certainly pursue and chase after one in the form of a great flame or some other shape.

775 As we proceed to set down the present data relating to the participation of the dead in the lives of the Guajiro community, we shall refer to those related to the spirits of suicides with the idea of obtaining greater objectivity in our statements.

Presence and life of the dead. The spirit of the dead, known usually by the name wanurú and at other times as yoruja, on being separated from its body wanders about the world. Although it no longer has any tangible relationship with terrestial things, it is still dangerous. Usually it takes refuge in lonely and isolated places such as in some cemeteries, in the crevices formed by sea erosion in Cabo de la Vela, or in the solitudes of the Emejuy forest. But it appears that in addition to these places frequented by the spirits of the dead, there is one undetermined special place far away from La Guajira. It is customary when a 764 woman has died to cover her face with paipai (a paint for the 775 face) before wrapping her in her shroud and placing her in her coffin ready for burial. The explanation for this is that she is going on a long journey, a very long journey, and the sun to which she will be exposed will be very strong and harmful to her face. For this reason, according to Guajiro custom, they must try to protect the skin of her face from the sun's action by the use of this face paint. Also she is going to pay a visit, and it is indispensable that a woman should have her face painted when visiting friends or relatives (55).

751 55. The Guajiro woman, every time she is exposed to the sun's rays, protects her face with paipai powder (color of burnt sienna)

[82 cont.]

775 formalities agreed upon with the victim's family, find that it imposes on them a sort of punishment, a rhythm of life totally different from that to which they were normally accustomed and which can be interpreted in two ways: (a) as a purification rite; (b) as a change of personality, in order to avoid the mortifying presence of the spirit face to face with the murderer. [83] To us the second interpretation appears clearer and more acceptable as we do not know of any other rites of purification in La Guajira which can show reason for the first assumption.

682 783 A repentant murderer, according to the statement collected by our colleague and expedition companion, Licentiate Milcíades Chaves Ch., is punished by his own will as well as by the decision of his family through norms imposed by his uncles and aunts. He voluntarily submits to them so as not to commit a second time the same delict which constituted his own ruin and that of his family, who like himself are liable to become victims of the retaliation of the murdered man's relatives in revenge for the murder. This punishment is executed in the following way:

1) The murderer must spend five or six days hiding in the selva or some distant mountain.

[264] 2) He must take no solid food. He is only allowed to take hot drinks or very thin mazamorro (corn chicha), and water.

3) He must not speak to anyone and must be on the alert all the time, with his rifle ready to defend himself from his enemies.

4) He must disguise himself: cut his hair, wear special belts and fringes, and wear a robe, black in color. (This robe is so small and short that it barely covers the top part of his body.)

[513] 5) In the forest he must sleep on the ground at night. Above all, he should not sleep face upward because the soul of [775] his victim may climb into his mouth and press on his chest, even to the extent of killing him by asphyxia. He may only return to his home for a short time to rest in a hammock, but this must be so small that he cannot lie comfortably on it, and due to this inconvenience he is unable to sleep for long.

[231] 6) He must eat and sleep very little and be continually alert, having for his only companion a dog, whose senses will warn him of the approach of danger

682 783 [83 cont.] warn him of the approach of danger.

7) He must abstain from all business and renounce friendships for some years, avoid social gatherings, especially those of a festive or drinking type.

8) In the case that the two family groups – that of the murderer and that of his victim – do not come to an agreement he, the murderer, must leave the country of his own free will and go to some distant place.

If the murderer should not comply with the requisites indicated, he can be certain that the spirit of his victim will deliver him defenseless into [84] the hands of his enemies, who will immediately kill him to satisfy their vengeance.

We can clearly see two essential things that stand out from these facts: (a) that the murderer, by the social crime he has committed, places himself automatically in the condition of an outcast, one impure, or more correctly, a contaminated, dangerous being. For this reason he becomes an individual who [614] must be set apart from the community. (b) The murderer's family, at the same time that it provides him with the means for going away, carrying out one of its main functions, mutual assistance among its members, takes care that the outcast does not fall an easy prey to his victim's spirit. His retirement from his habitual haunts, from his acquaintances, and particularly 682 785 from his own relatives; his disguise by cutting his hair and wearing certain articles of clothing; his not sleeping in a hammock; his avoiding his face being seen (sleeping face down); his not mixing with friends in business and in social gatherings; and finally, his going away a long distance from his clan, all demonstrate clearly to us that what the murderer is endeavoring to do – consciously or unconsciously – is to effect a total change of personality, we should almost say that he tries to convert himself into another hypothetical person, unrecognizable especially to the spirit of the person he has killed, to avoid its discovering him and taking its revenge on his body.

The clearest demonstration that the change of personality is made to mislead the murdered man is the fact that only when it is found impossible to reach an agreement between the two

[88 cont.]

755 the child in the warm sand, covering it to the base of its head. There is a decided magic intervention, the effect of which we 782 do not know on the part of the sacrificed animal which, as we 825 have said, shares the contaminating quality of its dead owner.

Other beliefs which confirm what has been stated are the 843 following: The husband of a pregnant woman should never, for 845 any motive whatsoever, dig a grave or assist in the construction of a vault for either a primary or secondary burial ceremony, because in such a case his wife's delivery will not be normal; it will be prolonged with danger both to the mother and the child.

Neither should the mother-to-be watch a burial being placed in a vault because the previously mentioned phenomenon will be repeated: She will have a difficult delivery, through delay in the birth and pain.

●783 Anyone who has touched a man whose death was not due 753 to natural causes must not come near a sick person because if 764 he does the sick man will quickly die: This also applies to those who have helped in an exhumation or taken part in any of the ceremonies called for by the secondary burial. Neither should such a person go near small children because these will, according to Guajiro belief, automatically begin to cry and twist about, the victims of some sickness.

In general terms, the individual who approaches a corpse, who touches it, or who participates directly in the different ceremonies relating to it becomes contaminated. But he does not suffer the consequences of this contamination in his own person, unless it be a pregnant woman; he takes on the role of transmitting agent. He becomes an intermediary, if we can so call him, between the spirit and children, sick people, or pregnant women, which are the three classes of people preferred by the spirits of the dead on whom to practice their malevolent contaminations. In all three cases the weakness of the contaminated person is evident: the sick person, the child in the womb unable to defend itself, and the newborn also incapable of defending itself against the spirit as it shows in contrast to the other members of the community, that is, the adults on whom it depends for its

[88 cont.]

753 subsistence and in general for every aspect of its life.

764 The relation spirit-sickness-death, which we have re-

783 ferred to in previous sections, is corroborated by this class of beings exposed to the harmful influence of the spirits almost in the same sense as that in which science regards sickness, i.e., the greater the weakness the greater the possibility of contamination from pathogenic germs. In short, [89] death occurs more frequently among old people and children than among adults. It is only that pathogenic germs, or the various causes of sickness among the Guajiro, are reduced, due to their mentality and in the majority of cases, to one cause only, wanurú, the spirit of sickness and death.

[p. 90 is blank]

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[91] VI

Magic Charms
(Fetishes, Amulets, and Talismans)

789 As these three terms, fetish, amulet, and talisman generally lend themselves to confusion, we wish to clarify the meaning of each one before we proceed further with the subject.

Amulet "indicates an object that possesses the magic, passive quality of defending the wearer from malignant influences..." (56)

56. Castiglioni. Op. cit., VI, 87.

Fetish derives from the Portuguese feitiço, corresponding to the Latin word facticius ("made by hand"), and at first was used to describe Christian amulets, but was used by navigators in the fifteenth century to describe the primitively carved wood and stone which were worshiped as bearers of magic forces by the Negroes of West Africa. The fetish "is an efficacious charm whose supposed action is guided by the wish of its owner." (57)

57. Born. Op. cit., 2-3.